

**Amendments to the Claims:**

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings of claims in the application:

**Listing of Claims:**

1. (currently amended) A routing device comprising:  
an operating system kernel;  
a plurality of virtual routers, wherein virtual router further comprises:  
a routing protocol stack configured to handle a plurality of routing  
protocols;  
a plurality of interface drivers configured to communicate with a plurality  
of corresponding physical interfaces;  
an Internet Protocol (IP) stack configured to interact with the routing  
protocol stack and perform a forwarding function via the plurality of interface drivers, the IP  
stack having a forwarding information table, information from which is used to perform the  
forwarding function; and  
a socket layer having a corresponding socket application programming  
interface, the socket layer configured to facilitate interactions between the IP stack and the  
routing protocol stack and the application, wherein the socket application programming interface  
is used to facilitate communications with the socket layer;  
a router manager configured to manage the plurality of virtual routers; and  
an application, wherein the application is situated external to the plurality of  
virtual routers;  
wherein the application is able to selectively communicate with one or more of  
the plurality of virtual routers and the operating system kernel on a dynamic basis to have the  
one or more virtual routers perform a plurality of tasks.
2. (original) The routing device of claim 1 wherein software is used to implement the plurality of virtual routers and the router manager.

3. (canceled).

4. (currently amended) The routing device of claim [[3]] ~~1 further comprising:  
an operating system kernel;~~

wherein the IP stack of each of the plurality of virtual routers resides external to the operating system kernel.

5. (original) The routing device of claim 4 wherein the operating system kernel further includes an associated socket layer, the socket layer having a corresponding socket application programming interface; and

wherein the application is able to communicate with the operating system kernel via the associated socket layer using the corresponding socket application programming interface to have the operating system kernel perform one or more of the plurality of tasks.

6. (original) An UNIX system incorporating the routing device as recited in claim 1.

7. (original) A routing device comprising:

an operating system kernel;

a virtual router, wherein the virtual router resides external to the operating system kernel;

a router manager configured to manage the virtual router;

an application residing external to the virtual router; and

a plurality of physical interfaces;

wherein the application is able to selectively interact with the virtual router and the operating system kernel on a dynamic basis in order to have the virtual router and the operating system kernel perform a plurality of tasks for the application.

8. (original) The routing device of claim 7 wherein software is used to implement the virtual router and the router manager.

9. (original) The routing device of claim 7 wherein the virtual router further includes:

a routing protocol stack configured to handle a plurality of routing protocols;  
a plurality of interface drivers configured to communicate with corresponding physical interfaces;

an Internet Protocol (IP) stack configured to interact with the routing protocol stack and perform a forwarding function via the plurality of interface drivers, the IP stack having a forwarding information table, information from which is used to perform the forwarding function; and

a socket layer having a corresponding socket application programming interface, the socket layer configured to facilitate interactions between the IP stack and the routing protocol stack and the application, wherein the socket application programming interface is used to facilitate communications with the socket layer.

10. (original) The routing device of claim 9 wherein the IP stack of the virtual router resides external to the operating system kernel.

11. (original) The routing device of claim 9 wherein the operating system kernel further includes an associated socket layer, the socket layer having a corresponding socket application programming interface; and

wherein the application is able to communicate with the operating system kernel via the associated socket layer using the corresponding socket application programming interface to have the operating system kernel perform one or more of the plurality of tasks.

12. (original) An UNIX system incorporating the routing device as recited in claim 7.

13. (currently amended) A routing device comprising:  
an operating system kernel;

a plurality of virtual routers, each virtual router having an associated socket layer and an Internet Protocol (IP) stack, the associated socket layer having a corresponding socket application programming interface configured to facilitate communications with the associated socket layer; and

an application residing external to the plurality of virtual routers;

wherein the associated socket layer is configured to facilitate interactions between the IP stack and the application;

wherein the application is able to selectively interact with one of the plurality of virtual routers via the associated socket layer; [[and]]

wherein the application uses the corresponding socket application programming interface to interact with the associated socket layer; and

wherein the application is able to selectively interact with one or more of the plurality of virtual routers and the operating system kernel on a dynamic basis in order to have one or more of the plurality of virtual routers and the operating system kernel perform a plurality of tasks for the application.

14. (canceled).

15. (original) The routing device of claim 13 wherein the corresponding IP stacks of the plurality of virtual routers reside external to the operating system kernel.

16. (original) An UNIX system incorporating the routing device as recited in claim 13.